

**REMARKS**

The Office Action mailed May 5, 2004 has been reviewed and the comments of the Patent and Trademark Office have been considered. Claims 1-16 were pending in the application. Claims 1 and 2 have been amended and no claims have been cancelled or newly added. Therefore, claims 1-16 are pending in the application and are presented for reconsideration.

This Amendment changes claims in this application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remain under examination in the application, are presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier.

Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. In reply, applicant has amended claim 1 to address the issue noted in the office action and submit that claim 1 meets the requirements of § 112, second paragraph. It should be noted that the subject matter added to claim 1 is described, for example, at lines 26-36 on page 5 of the specification and in Fig. 2. Accordingly, no new matter has been added.

In the Office Action, claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. patent 5,719,681 to Sasanuma (hereafter "Sasanuma"). Claims 2-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sasanuma in view of U.S. patent 5,936,741 to Burns (hereafter "Burns"). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections for at least the following reasons.

Independent claim 1 recites a hardware control signal that represents that data exists when the color image data is supplied and exists in the image forming apparatus, while a software control signal determines whether or not a specific hidden pattern is added to a color image. A specific hidden pattern control signal synthesizing means synthesizes a control signal by which the specific hidden pattern is necessarily formed on the output image when either the hardware signal or the software signal exists. This ensures that the hidden pattern is always added when the color image data is present and output by the image forming apparatus. These recited features are not disclosed or suggested by the applied prior art.

Specifically, in the fourth paragraph (pages 2 and 3), the office action asserts that Sasanuma discloses an image forming apparatus which forms an image on an image forming medium and which can form a specific hidden pattern for specifying an apparatus at a specific

position on said medium. The office action further states that Sasanuma further discloses both a software control signal (column 9, lines 55-57) and a hardware control signal (from column 5, line 64 to column 6, line 3) which are used as control signals for adding the specific hidden pattern (column 10, lines 55-62).

However, it should be noted that while Sasanuma discloses the adding pattern of "ABCD" and "1234" in the two rows shown in FIG. 14, Sasanuma only discloses that "one of the values P1-P4 is selected according to the pattern level selection signal PS designated by the CPU 414" (column 9, line 55-57), and that "the determination circuit 409 determines a possibility that the original placed on the original glass table 203 is at least one of a plurality of specific originals . . . and . . . the determination signal H is output in two bits." (column 5, line 64 to column 6, line 1)

As described above, Sasanuma discloses neither a hardware control signal that represents that data exists when the color image data is supplied and exists in the image forming apparatus, nor a software control signal determining whether or not a specific hidden pattern is added to a color image. Accordingly, it is very clear that the disclosure of Sasanuma is very different from the features recited in claim 1 and, therefore, claim 1 is patentable over the applied prior art.

In the sixth paragraph (pages 3-7), the office action states that the subject matter of claim 2 of our application is easily conceived by the skilled person by means of the combination of Sasanuma and Burns. The office action states that Sasanuma discloses hardware control signal supplying means (element 309 in fig. 3) and software control signal supplying means (elements 414 and 416 in figure 2)..

However, as has been described above, Sasanuma only discloses a maximum value circuit 309 for outputting as a determination signal B of a 2-bit signal, a maximum value among the determination results from the color tone determination circuit 303-1 to 303-8 in FIG. 3 thereof. Nowhere does Sasanuma describe that the determination signal H is a hardware control signal representing the existence of data when the color image data is supplied and exists in the image forming apparatus.

Likewise, Sasanuma only discloses a microcomputer (CPU) 414 for supervising control of the apparatus, a ROM 415 for storing a program for operating the CPU 414, and a

RAM 416 for providing a work area which executes various program in FIG. 2. Accordingly, Sasanuma does not describe anywhere that the CPU 414 outputs the control signal for determining whether or not a specific hidden pattern is added to a color image.

Furthermore, even though Sasanuma discloses that the CPU 414, ROM 415 and RAM 416 designate the pattern level selection signal PS, Sasanuma does not describe the control signal synthesizing means for synthesizing a control signal in the manner that the specific hidden pattern is necessarily formed on a color image when a usual image is formed on the image forming medium based on the hardware control signal and the software control signal.

Even though Sasanuma discloses an adder 912 in FIG. 11 for adding the pattern signal B to the input signal A such as signal V, Sasanuma does not describe the image formation output signal synthesizing means for synthesizing the color image data supplied from the image data supplying means and the specific hidden pattern selected by the pattern selecting means when the image data is inputted.

Accordingly, neither Sasanuma nor Burns (and therefore neither their reasonable combination) discloses the claimed hardware control signal, software control signal, control signal synthesizing means as recited in the pending claims 1 and 2.

The remaining dependent claims are also allowable for at least the same reasons as the independent claims on which they ultimately depend. In addition, they recite additional patentable when considered as a whole.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, applicant submits that the application is now in condition for allowance. If there are any questions regarding the application, or if an examiner's amendment would facilitate the allowance of one or more of the claims, the examiner is courteously invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the local telephone number below.

Should additional fees be necessary in connection with the filing of this paper, or if a petition for extension of time is required for timely acceptance of same, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge deposit account No. 19-0741 for any such fees; and applicant hereby petitions for any needed extension of time.

Respectfully submitted,

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